

BIBLICAL SEPARATION

Updated March 27, 2006 (first published April 23, 2002) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) –

Based on the massive amount of correspondence I receive from people who reprove me for practicing separation, one would think that separation is not something that is clearly taught in Scripture.

In fact, though, it is taught in dozens of passages.

2 Timothy 2:15-26 is a key one because it contains a summary of this vital doctrine.

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;
26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

The Foundation of Separation

First, we see the foundation of separation, which is a strong knowledge of the Scriptures. “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15). Unless the believer has a good foundation in the Word of God, he will not be able to discern truth from error and therefore will not be able to practice separation properly. Yet, when we look around at Bible believing churches, it is frightening to see how shallow the average church member’s knowledge of the Bible is. Many have never read the Bible through even one time. They are not skillful enough with the Bible to answer the challenges of false teachers. If church members are weak in Bible knowledge, they are susceptible to being led astray from the truth. Further, a good knowledge of the Scripture is necessary for spiritual discernment, and it is impossible to understand the issue of separation without keen spiritual discernment.

Following is a simple test of Bible knowledge:

(1) Do you read the Bible (Rev. 1:3)? The Bible is a book, and it should be read systematically. Yet some Christians have been saved for many years and have not read the Bible through even once.

(2) Do you study the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15)? Reading the Bible is not enough; it must be studied. Words must be defined; passages interpreted; the message applied to one’s life, etc.

(3) Do you know the meaning of Bible words? For example, can you define the following words from our text? *subvert* (2 Tim. 2:14), *profane* (2 Tim. 2:16), *sanctified* (2 Tim. 2:21), *meet* (2 Tim. 2:21), *peradventure* (2 Tim. 2:25),

repentance (v. 25). It is impossible to understand the Bible if you don't know the meaning of individual Bible words, and the only way to obtain such knowledge is a daily and diligent use of a good Bible dictionary, such as the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*. Far too many Christians read their Bible in a hasty manner and do not take the time to study it. Rarely if ever do they stop and look up words that they do not understand. They don't go to the effort to obtain good Bible study tools and if they do own them, they don't use them often enough.

(4) Do you know what each major section of the Bible means and how it all fits together? Such knowledge is crucial if one wants to understand the Bible properly. The Bible is one Book, but it is composed of 66 individual books. It is also made up of major divisions: the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy), the Historical Writings (Joshua-Esther), the Poetical Books (Job-Song of Solomon), the Prophets (Isaiah-Malachi), the Gospels (Matthew-John), Acts, the Pauline Epistles (Romans-Titus), the General Epistles (Hebrews-Jude), and Revelation. To understand the Bible at any serious level, it is necessary to understand the teaching of each section and how it fits into the message of the Bible as a whole. A good Bible survey is a starting point for obtaining this kind of knowledge.

(5) Do you understand the O.T. types (i.e., the tabernacle, the Old Testament priesthood, the Levitical offerings)? Much of the Old Testament is made up of types that teach spiritual lessons about Christ and salvation and Christian living. It is impossible to understand the Bible without a good knowledge of these types.

(6) Do you understand Bible prophecy? Much of the Scripture is composed of prophecy. Some of the prophecies have been fulfilled while some of them await fulfillment. It is impossible to have a good grasp of Scripture if one does not understand the prophetic element. This means that one must understand such things as the covenants (i.e., Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New), the kingdom of God, Messianic prophecy, prophecy pertaining to Israel, prophecy pertaining to the nations, prophecy pertaining to the course of the church age, and future

events (i.e., the rapture, the tribulation, the coming of Christ, the millennium, and the judgments).

I am, therefore, convinced that a basic Bible school course of instruction is the STARTING POINT for a good grasp of the Scripture.

It is the church's responsibility to train its members thoroughly in the Word of God. The Lord Jesus stated that this is a necessary part of fulfilling His Great Commission. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"* (Mat. 28:19-20).

Every church should be a Bible school.

Thus, the foundation of Bible separation is a strong knowledge of the Word of God. It is through such knowledge that the believer understands the difference between truth and error and can therefore know what he is to avoid.

Further, it is through such knowledge that the believer gains spiritual discernment so that he can have the wisdom to practice separation. Many people write to me and tell me that they are confused about separation and ask many questions on this topic, but a strong knowledge of the Word of God will take away the confusion and will enable the believer to understand these matters.

The Method of Separation

The method of separation is seen in 2 Timothy 2:16-17. *"But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus."*

FIRST, WE ARE TO PLAINLY IDENTIFY THEM (v. 17). The practice of separation begins with identifying those that teach error. Paul named the names of false teachers and compromisers 10 times in 1 and 2 Timothy alone. Romans 16:17 says “mark” them. Unless the preacher plainly identifies the false teachers, how can the people be protected from them? It is not enough to warn about false doctrine in general. Yet it is common today for preachers not to name names and not to plainly identify those who are teaching error. Much of the preaching today, even in allegedly fundamentalist Bible-believing churches, is vague and sin and error are rarely mentioned except in generalities.

SECOND, WE ARE TO SEPARATE FROM THEM. When we have identified the false teachers, then we are to separate from them.

Notice the terms that are used to describe separation in the Scripture:

“shun” v. 16

“purge oneself from” (2 Tim. 2:21)

“from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5)

“avoid” (Rom. 16:17)

“have no fellowship with” (2 Cor. 6:14)

“receive him not” (2 John 10).

Separation means to avoid the false teachers as well as their teaching. It involves disassociating from their meetings. It involves staying away from their books. The average Christian bookstore today is a dangerous place because it is filled with books that teach false doctrine. Separation means that I don’t watch false teachers on the television and don’t listen to them on the radio. One pastor in Michigan told me that his weakest and most unstable people are those who listen most frequently to Christian radio, and that is because the airwaves are filled today with compromisers and false teachers. Separation means that we shouldn’t study in their schools. It is common today for professors at fundamentalist schools to pursue doctorates at compromised schools such as Dallas Seminary, or worse. If one studies at the feet of New Evangelicals there is a great

possibility that he will become a New Evangelical. Separation also means we should avoid the music produced by those that are committed to doctrinal error. Contemporary Christian Music is unscriptural in its doctrine (i.e., ecumenism, charismaticism) and philosophy (i.e., music is neutral, you have to be like the sinner to win the sinner); therefore, God's people should avoid it.

The Reason for Separation

The reason for separation is seen in 2 Timothy 2:16b, 17. *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus.”*

Error corrupts and spreads. Compare the following Scriptures:

“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:18).

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor. 5:6).

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33).

Consider the example of New Evangelicalism. Its leaders renounced separatism in 1948, and within 10 years the movement was infiltrated with liberal views of the Bible. One of the prominent New Evangelical leaders, Harold Lindsell, testified: “I must regretfully conclude that the term evangelical has been so debased that it has lost its usefulness. ... WITHIN A DECADE OR SO NEOEVANGELICALISM . . . WAS BEING ASSAULTED FROM WITHIN BY INCREASING SKEPTICISM WITH REGARD TO BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY OR INERRANCY” (Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance*, 1979).

Many fundamentalist churches today have started out on the same journey that the New Evangelicals began 50 years ago, and the result will be the same. If we do not separate from error, we will be polluted by it.

Consider the example of evangelist Jack Van Impe. In the 1970s, he preached in fundamentalist circles. In the early 1980s, though, he changed his doctrine. In his 1984 book *Heart Disease in Christ's Body* he denounced separatism and called for ecumenical unity. "God comes into the heart of Catholics, and Lutherans, and Baptists, and Pentecostals, and with God in us, we can fellowship with one another." Within a few years after denouncing separation, Van Impe was in close fellowship with Rome. On his television program on September 29, 1992, Van Impe "praised Pope John Paul II, calling him a 'great' man, extolling his character and telling his audience that they ought to 'thank God' for such a courageous religious leader." In 1993, Van Impe published *Startling Revelations:: Pope John Paul II*, a video that presented the Pope as a defender of the faith!

Evangelist James Robison is another example of the corrupting influence of error. He was once a strong Bible preacher who denounced sin and modernism and other theological errors. In 1980, though, he became a charismatic, believing that demons were cast out of him. In 1987, I heard him speak at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit & World Evangelization, which involved thousands of Roman Catholics. There he said, "I tell you what, one of the finest moral representatives of morality in this earth right now is the pope. People who know it really believe he is a born again man." How the mighty have fallen, because they have refused to practice separation!

Consider the example of Charles Fuller, founder of Fuller Theological Seminary. Fuller was a fundamentalist and believed in the inerrancy of Scripture, but he bought into the New Evangelical principles of infiltration and intellectualism and educated his son at the feet of modernists in Germany. As a result, Fuller's son, Daniel, denied the faith of his father and threw aside the doctrine of the

infallible inspiration of Scripture, believing that the Bible is inspired in its doctrine but not in its science and its history.

Consider the example of J.C. Ryle, 19th century Anglican evangelical leader. He was the Bishop of Liverpool from 1880-1900 and wrote boldly for biblical truth, but he didn't separate from the apostate Anglican Church and educated his son at Anglican schools even though they were permeated with theological liberalism. As a result, his son, Herbert Edward Ryle, became Hulsean Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and ultimately Dean of Westminster, but he denied verbal inspiration, calling it "irretrievably shattered" and labeling it "bibliolatry" (M.H. Fitzgerald, *Memoir of Herbert Edward Ryle*, London: Macmillan, 1928). J.C. Ryle's successor as bishop of Liverpool from 1923-44, Albert A. David, was an ultra modernist who "saw it as his task to set minds and spirits free." He supported euthanasia and brought in Christ-denying Unitarians to speak at Liverpool.

Consider the example of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). It has been observed by men of God that fundamentalist churches that accept CCM soon change their separatist character, and this is because of the doctrinal corruption that is inherent in CCM. Those that do not separate from it are influenced by it.

The late Gordon Sears, who had an evangelistic music ministry for many years and ministered with Rudy Atwood, was saddened before his death by the dramatic change that was occurring in many fundamental Baptist churches. He warned: "When the standard of music is lowered, then the standard of dress is also lowered. When the standard of dress is lowered, then the standard of conduct is also lowered. When the standard of conduct is lowered, then the sense of value in God's truth is lowered."

Frank Garlock of Majesty Music warns, "If a church starts using CCM it will eventually lose all other standards" (Garlock, Bob Jones University Chapel, March 12, 2001).

The late fundamentalist leader Ernest Pickering gave a similar warning: “Perhaps nothing precipitates a slide toward New Evangelicalism more than the introduction of Contemporary Christian Music. This inevitably leads toward a gradual slide in other areas as well until the entire church is infiltrated by ideas and programs alien to the original position of the church.”

CCM is not just music; it is a doctrine; it is a philosophy of the Christian life. It is “rock and roll Christianity.” It is anti-fundamentalist, anti-separatist. It is charismatic and ecumenical in doctrine and practice, and when it comes, it brings its philosophy.

God warns His people to separate from false doctrine because of its corrupting influence, and the wise have ears to hear.

The Basis of Separation

The basis of separation is seen in 2 Timothy 2:18. *“Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”*

One man wrote to me and said, “You separate from everything you disagree with.” That is not true. I have a clear basis for separation, and it is described in the Bible.

Consider the following points on this issue:

First, the biblical basis of separation is much narrower than commonly thought.

The contemporary concept of fellowship is illustrated by Promise Keepers. They claim that only the “major” doctrines are important and “lesser” doctrines should not cause division. Those who speak at their events are not allowed to

touch on controversial things. This has been described as a division between “essentials” and “non-essentials.”

“Some of the issues that should not be addressed: Eternal security, the gifts of the Spirit, baptism, Pretribulation or post-tribulation prophecy, sacraments or ordinances” (PK Ambassador booklet)

For the following reasons we know that this philosophy is not Scriptural:

First, true Christian unity requires oneness of mind (Rom. 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27). This is a very narrow basis of unity. True Christian unity is not “unity in doctrinal diversity.”

Second, in 1 Timothy 1:3 we see that our doctrinal position is to be extremely narrow. Timothy was to allow “no other doctrine”! A stricter stand toward doctrine could not be imagined.

Third, in 1 Timothy 6:14, Timothy was instructed to keep the apostolic doctrine “*without spot*.” That refers to the smallest things, the details, the things typically considered insignificant and “non-essential” today.

Fourth, in Christ’s Great Commission, the churches are instructed to train the converts “*to observe ALL things whatsoever I have commanded you*” (Mat. 28:20). This means the preachers are to have an “all things” attitude in regard to the teaching of Scripture and they are to impart that exact attitude to every believer under their watchcare.

Consider, too, that many of the examples of separation in Scripture cover matters that typically fall under the category of “non-essential” today.

2 Timothy 2:18 is an example. The basis of separation in this situation was prophetic doctrine. Some were saying that the resurrection was past already. These false teachers were spiritualizing future events. This type of thing is widely thought to be a non-separation issue today. For example, the allegorical

interpretation of prophecy is widespread among “evangelicals” and “fundamentalists,” but this doctrine is contrary to the Word of God and I am convinced from 2 Timothy 2:18 that we should separate from those who hold this error.

In light of these clear Bible illustrations, I would rather err on the side of being too strict in doctrine and separation than not strict enough. It is obvious that the Lord wants His people to be exceedingly strict in doctrine even while maintaining a gracious heart toward those with whom they differ.

Second, there are many types of false doctrines mentioned in the New Testament.

Following are some of them:

(1) There is false doctrine pertaining to the doctrine of Christ (i.e., Colossians; 2 John). Examples of this today are the theological modernists who deny the supernatural Christ of the Bible; Jehovah’s Witnesses, who teach that Jesus is not God; Mormons, who teach that Jesus was the spirit brother of Satan; and Unitarians, who deny Christ’s deity.

(2) There is false teaching pertaining to the doctrine of salvation and the gospel (i.e., the book of Galatians). The Roman Catholic Church corrupts the gospel, as do all of the cults, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, the Seventh-day Adventists, and the Church of Christ. All of these intermingle grace and works to produce a false gospel. *“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work”* (Rom. 11:6).

(3) There is false doctrine pertaining to the doctrine of godliness (i.e., 1 Tim. 6:3-5). Examples of this today are those who claim the believer is not required to separate from the world, that he is at liberty to look like the world, listen to the world’s sexy music, and party with the world, so long as he “loves the Lord.”

(4) There is false doctrine pertaining to church doctrine (i.e., 1 Tim. 3:15; 6:14). The apostle Paul stated that even church doctrine is to be kept without spot. God has given a pattern for the New Testament church and we have no authority to ignore or change it. For example, those who allow women to preach are disobeying the plain command of God in regard to the church (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34). Such disobedience should not be ignored by God's people. We should separate from those who do such things.

Thus there are different kinds of false teachers. Some will pervert one doctrine; some another. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, holds to deity of Christ but is heretical in many other doctrines. The fact that it holds to some sound doctrine does not mean that we should accept it.

Third, all error should be avoided but not all error is equally harmful.

There are "damnable heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1). This describes heresies that damn the soul to eternal hell. You can't be saved if you hold to a damnable heresy. Another term for this is "fatal heresies," referring to heresies that affect salvation itself.

2 Cor. 11:4 lists three broad categories of damnable heresies: *false gospels*, *false christs*, and *false spirits*.

Other examples of damnable heresies are as follows:

To deny the resurrection of Christ is damnable. Paul taught that you cannot be saved apart from the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:14).

To deny the virgin birth is damnable. If Jesus was not virgin born, He was a sinner; and if He was a sinner, He could not be our Savior. In 2001, I had a conversation with a student at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, which is associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. In the chapel is a

statue of Karl Barth, and he is held forth as one of the heroes of the faith even though he denied the virgin birth. The student was guiding a tour of the multi-million dollar chapel, and after the tour was completed I asked him why they would feature Barth, who denied the virgin birth. The student argued that one can be a Christian and not believe in the virgin birth, which simply is not true.

To deny the infallible inspiration of Holy Scripture is damnable. The Lord Jesus Christ taught that the Scripture cannot be broken (Jn. 10:35) and the apostles taught that all of it is given by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is concluded with a solemn divine seal against taking away from or adding to it (Rev. 22:18-19). I believe that the questioning of the inspiration of Scripture is a damnable heresy, because the Scripture is very foundation of the Christian faith (Rom. 10:17).

The believer is not supposed to treat all false teachers the same. Those who deny the “cardinal doctrines” of the faith, such as those we have listed, are not saved and should not be treated as true brethren. Paul said those who corrupt the gospel are cursed of God (Gal. 1:7-8).

John said those that corrupt the doctrine of Christ should not even be greeted or allowed into our houses and should not be assisted in any fashion.

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 8-11).

This is how we should treat those that deny the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith and that demonstrate thereby that they are not true Christians.

This is not, though, how we treat those who hold false doctrines of a lesser variety but who show evidence that they hold to the true gospel and the true Christ and the true Spirit.

The next point deals with how we should treat these.

Fourth, there is a separation even from true brethren when they are walking in disobedience (2 Thess. 3:6-15).

If we are commanded to separate from a brother over the issue of whether or not a man is working, surely we must separate from brethren over larger issues of disobedience, such as refusing to obey separation itself.

Paul warned about Demas and his worldliness (2 Tim. 4). Would he not, then, warn about something as grossly worldly as Christian rock?

Following are some examples of how this is applied today.

We should avoid New Evangelicals who refuse to practice separation: Examples are Billy Graham, Luis Palau, Chuck Colson, and Chuck Swindoll.

We should avoid the Charismatic movement, because of its commitment to errors about the Holy Spirit, ecumenism, etc.

We should avoid Christian Psychologists like James Dobson who preach an unscriptural self-esteem message

We should avoid the Southern Baptist Convention, which is New Evangelical to the core, supporting Billy Graham's ecumenical philosophy and Rick Warren's Purpose Driven one, for example, and which is permeated with worldliness and theological modernism at the state and local levels.

We should avoid CCM, which refuses to obey God's commands to separate from the world, which is opposed to biblical fundamentalism, and which is permeated with charismatic error.

We must separate from men who are committed to such things, even though we do not doubt their salvation, because they have committed themselves to a path of error and are leading people astray by their doctrine and example.

Fifth, the time or point of separation is when a commitment is made to error.

That is the meaning of heresy--a willful choice of error.

When certain independent Baptist preachers made a commitment to Promise Keepers, in spite of being challenged about it, they became heretics and many of their brethren separated from them.

The same is true when a preacher chooses any other ecumenical path or makes a clear commitment to CCM or otherwise commits himself to a path of error.

Sixth, there can be separation even while there is Christian love and appreciation (Phil. 1:15-19).

The ecumenists say, "We will live together in heaven; we should be able to work together on earth." That is not true, though. In heaven, we will be perfect. There will be no error or compromise in heaven, but there is plenty of it on earth and ever more so as we near the return of Christ.

In regard to this present life, God has plainly commanded us to separate from error and compromise. This does not mean, though, that we cannot love those with whom we differ. We can separate and love at the same time.

For example, I was not able to accept a preaching invitation from the Bible Presbyterians in Singapore, because I cannot agree with doctrines such as infant baptism and Calvinism; but I appreciate and love them in the Lord and I look forward to the day when we are no longer separated by differing doctrine.

The same is true for the old-line Pentecostals. I was led to Christ by such a man and I praise the Lord for him and others like him and I count them as dear brethren in Christ, though I cannot work with them because of our differing doctrines.

The same is true for neo-fundamentalists such as Jerry Falwell and the Baptist Bible Fellowship today. When I hear Jerry Falwell standing up boldly for Christ on Larry King's television program and in other public forums, I am thankful for him and love him in the Lord, but I could not work with him because I am convinced he has determined to walk in a path of compromise and disobedience to the Bible. I do not want his compromise to influence me and I do not want it to influence those to whom I preach.

The Wisdom of Separation

Next, we see the wisdom of separation. "*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things*" (2 Tim. 2:7). Separation requires divine wisdom. It is not a simple matter. At what point do we break fellowship? With what types of error do we draw the line? These are not always easy questions to answer, and the believer needs that wisdom and keen discernment that comes only through a close obedient walk with Christ and a strong knowledge of God's Word.

The Initiative of Separation

We see the initiative of separation in 2 Timothy 20-21. "*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*"

The believer himself is to take the initiate and not wait for heretics to separate from him. This means that when I see a church making a commitment to error, I

should leave it. People often write to me and make excuses for staying in a church that uses rock music, or that has women teachers, or that uses new Bible versions, or that has an unqualified or abusive pastor or worldly youth leaders, etc. They tell me that they are staying in order to try to change the church. But the Bible says the attempt to change serious error should be short lived. *“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”* (Titus 3:10). Further, if you don’t have authority in a church you probably will not be able to change it.

The Proper Attitude of Separation

Finally, we see the proper attitude of separation in 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

The proper attitude is gentleness, patience, meekness. The late evangelist Mel Rutter once exhorted me, “Be as strong as a rock in your position and as sweet as honey from the rock in your disposition.”

Please note that when the Bible says we are not to strive, it does not mean the believer is to avoid all conflict. In Acts 15:2 we see that the apostles had “no small dissension and disputation” in contending against error. There is a GOOD FIGHT (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). Jude 3 says there is an earnest contention that is to be made for the truth.

Yet, even when we are contending and fighting for the truth, we must maintain an attitude of gentleness and patience. The Lord’s battles are not won by the armor of the flesh, but by the power of the Spirit.

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